

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear Brian -

Thank you for your letter. You raise issues that I pray on every day. I wish I was afforded the same absolute certainty that you seem to possess. Alas, the world I occupy seems more complicated.

Al Qaeda did not start targeting America because of drone strikes; they did so after the U.S. based military facilities in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. Al Qaeda's founding principles

are not those of Mr. Mandela — they believe the West in general is a corrupting influence on the Muslim world, and that violence against civilian infidels is fully justified in the battle to reestablish the new Caliphate.

There is no doubt that clumsy and short-sighted U.S. policies have in the past contributed to anti-American sentiment. And any time America uses military strikes and there are innocent victims, we are hurting our image (and I believe hurting our souls). I must weigh that against the knowledge that at this moment there are men who are actively planning to blow up planes or markets or subways full of innocents, and when they succeed those victims are necessarily on my conscience as well.

Feel free to pray for me, Reverend, for I am a sinner. But do not pretend the choices we face in this sinful world are simple.

God Bless